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THE BEAR -- A BEDTIME STORY

The sheep herders around Big Piney, in Wyoming, are sleeping nights now. They didn't for a long time.

The epidemic of insomnia was cured by one application of -- no, it isn't a patent medicine advertisement. The reader may go straight on through with the assurance that he will not be tempted to buy anything.

The sheep herders are sleeping because Uncle Sam's hunters sent one big black bear to Kingdom Come before his natural time.

This bear -- they never named him, but just spoke of him in awed voices as The Bear -- was one of the worst actors that Wyoming or the West has ever known. He was unduly fond of mutton, but that was not the worst. The sheepmen might have boarded him, but he killed a great many sheep that he never touched -- scared them to death. That is, he frightened the flocks so terribly that they piled up, and smothered to death by hundreds. And still that was not the worst -- not for the herders, whatever it may have been for the owners.

The Bear took a devilish delight in destroying camps, tearing the tents into tatters, breaking up the furniture, carrying away the grub and -- well, he never got a chance at any of the tenters. They stayed awake and watched for him and always managed to be just gone from home when he arrived.

One day not long ago, Del Dearth and H. P. Williams, skilled hunters of the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, were stringing out some traps along the east boundary of the Wyoming National Forest. Williams, you may remember, is the hunter who killed the infamous Custer Wolf several months ago. And suddenly, while they were fixing up a trap, something came thrashing down the trail at a terrible rate. No, it wasn't The Bear. It was a sheep herder, on the run and panting like a lizard. He did not tarry with the hunters. He just explained that The Bear had chased him out of camp, and threw the word back over his shoulder as he went, "If you happen to see the owners of them sheep, tell 'em they can herd 'em themselves if they want 'em herded."

Williams and Dearth put out as hard as their horses could go, hoping to catch The Bear in camp, but they were too late. He had torn the tent in pieces,

bent the stove around a near-by tree, scattered the grub and was gone. The hunters took up his trail and followed it till they came to a heap of pine needles and other forest debris. It contained a side of bacon which The Bear had taken from the herder's tent and filed for future reference. Believing that The Bear was not far away, they took up the trail again -- and didn't have far to go. The Bear met them, duly incensed at the rape of his cache. The meeting took place in a little opening in the woods where the hunters had room to work their guns. One of them placed three bullets under The Bear's ear and the other sent one through his spinal column. At that, he lacked only a few yards of reaching them before they brought him down.

They say he was just about as big as a black bear ever grows. His weight was 650 pounds, he was 6 feet 2 inches long, and his hind foot was $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by 6 inches wide. But there was something in those woods that was not afraid of him, big and vicious as he was. He was badly battered and sliced and had evidently gotten the worst of it in some Dempsey-Carpentier contest of the jungle. The hunters knew that a huge grizzly had been ranging in that district and they guessed that the two had met and fought to a finish to find out which would be monarch of the Wyoming Forest.

But it was the black bear and not the grizzly that had caused consternation among the herders, and all is quiet now. Which proves that, at least for sheep herders in the bear country, the best soothing syrup is a Government hunter's rifle.